

A Challenge Worth Taking

Jesus Shares Tough Truths

Mark 8:27–38 NIV

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

God's Puzzling Plans



Life isn't easy. This is no surprise to most of us, but we sometimes hope to shelter kids from the challenges that surround us. It's important to share with children that, although this world has trials, God is with us through them and helps us with them. This lesson is a reminder that we can't argue with God's plan. We don't always understand His will and His ways, and things might not go as we'd hope. However, everything happens for a reason, and we can trust that God has our best in mind in the end, and He gives us strength for the journey.

We don't always want to hear about denying ourselves and suffering for the sake of Christ. After all, doesn't God love us? Shouldn't a Christian life be full of blessing? This passage can be a hard one to swallow, but it's important to recall that the Lord is with us through all that happens. In fact, Jesus suffered most of all, giving His own life for us. Because of that suffering, we know He walks with us through hard things and understands them. Jesus paid the ultimate price and fulfilled God's plan for salvation. We can trust that God's plan for our lives will come to great things in the end, even if we walk through challenges.

Passage: Mark 8:27-38

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Jigsaw puzzles; construction paper; decorative supplies; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; paper bags; string; Bibles.

More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story "Jesus and the Children"](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible story "The Good News"](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

Object Lesson (5 minutes)

Greet children and begin "arguments" with them...

Hello, Children of God!

I have some questions for you today... ask several questions for students to respond to, but disagree with the answer on each one, arguing your point even if it's a complete opinion question. Examples given.

What is the best kind of food to eat? What? No, not that one, that's terrible...Okay, another question for you. What is the best sport? Definitely not that one...nah, not that one either. Well, what is the hardest subject in school? What? That one's not so bad, I passed it just fine... What is it that I'm doing right now? I'm arguing with everything you say! It's especially odd that I would do that when most of the questions I'm asking are opinion-based. There isn't really a right or wrong answer, but I'm still disagreeing with yours.

Have you ever had an argument with someone? It can be frustrating, especially if it's with a family member or someone that you need to be around a lot. Have you ever argued with your parents? Sometimes you might disagree with them over something that they just don't understand...like maybe you want them to see that ice cream before dinner is a great idea, and for some reason they are insisting you have broccoli first. Now, usually you won't win this argument, and with good reason. Your parents have your best interests in mind and know that it's better to eat healthy food first. Have you ever tried to argue with God though? You're definitely not going to win that one. It's not wrong to share your feelings and frustrations with the Lord. He knows our emotions, after all, and doesn't mind hearing about them. But when we try to tell God what we think He should do, or try to demand things of Him according to our plans, it doesn't always work out like we'd think.

This is because, like our parents, God has our best interests in mind, and He has a plan that we might not understand right away.

This reminds me of a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples, sparking a bit of an argument with Peter. Jesus was explaining that He would have to suffer and die, which is a troubling thought. Peter didn't like that, and tried to tell Jesus not to talk that way. Jesus spoke plainly and even called Peter Satan! He told Him not to get in the way of God's plan. Jesus knew that Peter didn't fully comprehend what was going on, but that suffering and death was part of the big picture plan God had. Peter couldn't argue with what God had in mind. Something greater than his ideas was at work. Jesus went on to explain that to be a disciple required suffering. Following Him meant willingness to carry a cross and follow Him, recognizing that Christian life is hard.

God has a big plan for us, too. We don't always understand what that is, which can be frustrating. We don't necessarily want to suffer, but we know that things might be hard. Life in general is tough, and as Christians we might face extra challenges. The good news is that God walks with us through this. He knows it's hard because He faced the greatest trials on our behalf. Jesus came to live and die for us and for our salvation. He was willing to go through those painful things, so He understand what we deal with and helps us. He loves us and is present with us through everything that happens. Even when we struggle or don't know why certain things occur, we can trust in God and know that His plans are good. He cares for us and will always be present with us. We can hope in His love and be comforted by knowing that His promises and plans are more wonderful than we can imagine. No argument!

Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for always being with us

And helping us through challenges.

Help us to trust in your plans

Even when we don't understand them.

Thank you for your love.

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)



This passage reminds us that God's plan is good, and we can trust in Him. It also reflects the challenges of life as a Christian, but promises the hope that Jesus has been through hard things, and is with us. Start with an activity that uses these themes and gets kids thinking:

- Puzzle race: provide students (individual or groups) with jigsaw puzzles, and invite them to race to put them together. For added challenge, don't provide the picture that goes with the puzzle. Explain that God's plan can be like a puzzle, but in the end He has the big picture in mind.
- Who is Jesus? Discuss different jobs and roles that people have (employee, family member, etc.). Talk about different things that Jesus did and ways He continues to fulfill special roles for us.
- What does it cost? Have students come up with special items that they would wish to have or buy if possible. Identify how much each thing costs, and do a quick search to find out the cost if necessary. Emphasize that all things have a price.
- It's debatable! Have students break into two "debate teams" and provide a controversial topic. Assign each team a side and have them argue about which one is correct. Encourage kids to argue, and explain that someone in the story tried (unsuccessfully) to argue with Jesus.
- Carry the cross relay: Have a large cross (or other heavy/bulky item) for students to carry back and forth across a playing area. Assign relay teams and have kids take turns carrying the cross (literally) back and forth. Talk about what it might mean to "carry the cross" in a spiritual sense when it comes to discipleship with Christ.

Explain that the Gospel passage for this lesson involves a tough conversation that Jesus had with His disciples. Sometimes it's hard for us to hear things in the Bible, but important as well. We know that, no matter what, God loves us and is with us, and has great plans for our lives.

Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)



This passage contains a conversation with Christ and important (but hard to swallow) words of Him. Students can reenact the verses or read them out loud. Teachers can read out loud for younger audiences.

Mark 8:27–30 NIV Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” (28) They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” (29) “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.” (30) Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus repeatedly tried to explain to His disciples who He was, but they didn’t always understand. Others around Jesus didn’t understand who He was, either. Some people said He was a prophet, like Elijah or John the Baptist. They thought He was a teacher and saw His miracles, but didn’t always realize or believe that He was God. Peter confessed boldly and plainly that Jesus was “the Christ.” Of course, we now know who He is and why He came, but at the time they were still learning.

Ask: What do you say if people ask you about Jesus? How would you describe who He is?

Mark 8:31–33 NIV *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. (32) He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. (33) But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me,*

Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

This sounds like a hard conversation with Jesus. I probably wouldn't be too happy if a friend called me "Satan"! Peter didn't understand the big picture of God's plan. When he heard Jesus talking about suffering and death, he thought this was absurd and didn't want to hear it. A death plan never sounds good. He tried to pull Jesus aside and argue that He should quiet down, and Jesus rebuked him. Jesus tried to point out that Peter didn't have God's plan in mind. He knew his disciple couldn't comprehend what God was doing, but tried to encourage him to trust in his Messiah. There was a greater plan at work.

Ask: Have you ever argued with a friend? What helps in those situations?

Mark 8:34-35 NIV *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (35) For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."*

Now Jesus is making a grand announcement to everyone. Anyone who wants to follow Him must be willing to give up his/her own life. There is a cost of discipleship. It's not always easy to be a Christian, and we need to know that sacrifice might be involved. But there's a blessing promised within these words, too: "whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." This doesn't mean we earn our salvation, of course. Jesus has taken care of the hard part. But we can remember that it's not all about our lives right now. We might lose things that are of earthly value, but we'll gain much richer treasures in Heaven. It's worth it to set aside temporal things for eternal ones!

Ask: Can you think of a sacrifice you've made for something important? Why was it worth it?

Mark 8:36–38 NIV *What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? (37) Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (38) If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

Ask: How can we follow Jesus?

Sometimes the things we think matter a lot aren't as important as we imagine. We want to cling to things of this world, but forget that there are much greater things awaiting us. For kids, this means knowing that God has a wonderful plan for us. Sometimes we go through tough things in life, which are never pleasant. We don't always understand what God is doing. But He has a plan. Because of Jesus, we know He keeps His promises and has good plans for us. We can trust in Him and follow His word, even when it's hard, because He is with us. Jesus shared some challenging words in this passage, but we know He loved and helped people. He loves and helps us, too, and we can hope in His words, knowing that He is the way to life, now and for eternity!

Craft Activities (15 minutes)

Who is Jesus? What does He tell us to do? The conversation Jesus has with Peter in Mark chapter 8 can be a tough one to contemplate. Jesus asks His disciples who He is, and calls them to give up their own interests and follow Him. We don't always understand what God is doing in our lives, but He loves us and wants us to trust Him and serve Him. These crafts recall the principles of the passage. A "Who is Jesus Poster" considers the character of Christ. A "Cross-word Puzzle" remembers God's big picture plan. Let's get crafty!

Craft one: "Who is Jesus Poster"

You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue/tape
- Markers or crayons
- Extra decorations (stickers, etc.)
- Pipe cleaner/string (optional)



Procedure:

1. Cut several shapes out of construction paper (hearts, crosses, etc.). On each one, write a description of who Jesus is.
2. At the center of the paper, draw or glue a cross.
3. Attach the other descriptions of Jesus to the paper surrounding the cross.
4. Add verses or captions.
5. If desired, attach a hanger (string or pipe cleaner).



Craft Two: "Cross-Word Puzzle"

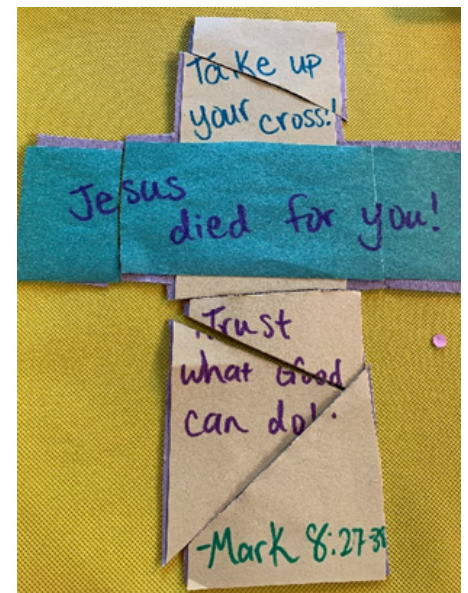
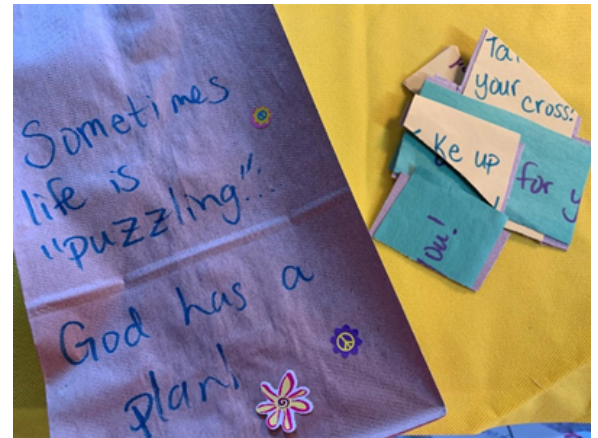
You will need:

- Paper bag
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Crayons or markers
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- Hard cardboard backing
- Decorative materials as desired



Procedure:

1. Cut a large cross out of construction paper (or cut two pieces of paper and glue in the shape of a cross).
2. Write verses or captions on the cross.
3. Glue onto hard backing like cardboard.
4. Cut the cross into pieces of desired shapes, to create a jigsaw puzzle.
5. Decorate the bag to store the puzzle pieces. Put together to remember God's plan!



Mark 8:36 NIV

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?





Word Search Puzzle

Jesus - Caesarea - John - Elijah - Peter - Scribe

Priest - Soul - Son - Father - Angel - Gospel

L	N	B	C	C	L	L	Y	L	G	S	G
C	S	J	F	A	T	H	E	R	N	M	E
Z	L	O	A	J	E	S	U	S	O	M	H
T	P	K	U	T	V	S	M	Q	N	J	A
S	B	R	E	L	I	J	A	H	O	T	W
V	C	D	I	S	G	O	N	R	P	N	Z
S	W	R	Z	E	O	H	G	K	E	T	F
F	J	M	I	V	S	N	E	N	T	A	D
Y	V	C	D	B	P	T	L	D	E	T	R
I	P	Y	I	Y	E	W	R	E	R	N	P
R	Q	B	L	M	L	H	S	M	X	A	E
O	L	A	V	A	F	B	G	L	Q	S	C

Word Search Answers

L	N	B	C	C	L	L	Y	L	G	S	G
C	S	J	F	A	T	H	E	R	N	M	E
Z	L	O	A	J	E	S	U	S	O	M	H
T	P	K	U	T	V	S	M	Q	N	J	A
S	B	R	E	L	I	J	A	H	O	T	W
V	C	D	I	S	G	O	N	R	P	N	Z
S	W	R	Z	E	O	H	G	K	E	T	F
F	J	M	I	V	S	N	E	N	T	A	D
Y	V	C	D	B	P	T	L	D	E	T	R
I	P	Y	I	Y	E	W	R	E	R	N	P
R	Q	B	L	M	L	H	S	M	X	A	E
O	L	A	V	A	F	B	G	L	Q	S	C